**JOB OUTLOOK** On average a physical therapist works about 40 hours per week. An average yearly salary is about $60,000, but the national range is $53,000-$108,000 per year. Here, in Wisconsin the yearly salaries range from about $55,000 to $94,000 (of 2009.) These ranges may be affected by a person’s experience, education and location or institute. Once an entry level therapist you may get promoted to a median or even an advanced level therapist. An entry level physical therapist makes about $55,120 per year in Wisconsin, but nationally it’s a little lower at $53, 620. At median level in Wisconsin it is $73,420, nationally about $76,310. Finally, at the advanced experience level, you may earn up to $94,120 in Wisconsin, and $107,920 nationally per year.

**EDUCATION** To be a “real” (or legal) physical therapist, you need to graduate a college with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher; you also need a granted license (different locations may require other Degrees in order to be accepted). Your academic experiences may also affect your ability to work in the physical therapy range. Some helpful classes to take while still in school are physiology, anatomy, biology, geometry, and chemistry. These will help you prepare for the responsibility. Some examples of your local employers could be hospitals, nursing homes, schools, clinics, and rehabilitation centers. Most therapists work in hospitals.

The best school to attend for physical therapy—according to *Physical Therapy Schools Info* assessment surveys—is the University of Southern California. The surveys concluded that this university offers the best programs and classes to take for physical therapy in the U.S. More info at <http://physicaltherapyschoolsinfo.org/top-physical-therapy-schools/>.

**INJURIES & RECOVERY** Physical therapy is a type of treatment that helps you when health problems make it difficult to move around and do everyday things. This treatment is normally expressed as different activities, exercises, and stretches that help your problem area. There are many forms of physical therapy that acquire to different issues such as back pain, tendon/ligament problems, muscular tears, spinal issues, arthritis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), other injuries and problems.

A physical therapist assists you with the treatment process to recovery. They may help or teach you with the exercises you perform that make it easier to do everyday things. A therapist may examine you and set up a plan according to your difficulties. He or she will then help you with your flexibility, stretches, endurance, balance, and pain. They will teach you the activities required for your well being so you can do them by yourself. Some techniques they may use to help are usage with water, heat, or cold to stimulate/calm your nerves. A third of adults 65 or older fall in the U.S. yearly. About 30% of those falls cause moderate to severe injuries. Physical therapy can help in reducing these numbers. PT helps patients regain their balance and/or range of motion to prevent these slips.

The best school to attend for physical therapy—according to *Physical Therapy Schools Info* assessment surveys—is the University of Southern California. The surveys concluded that the university offers the best programs and classes to take for physical therapy in the U.S. More info at <http://physicaltherapyschoolsinfo.org/top-physical-therapy-schools/>.

**A TYPICAL DAY** While treating a patient, you want to examine not just the part of body needing treatment, but the entire area of the problem spot. Treating only to the area of pain or discomfort doesn’t always solve the problem. This is because the ligaments in our bodies connect joints so they kind of work together too. This, for example, means that if a patient has a knee problem a therapist may want to help them in stretching the entire leg parts to help the knee function better altogether. You always want to be thinking of the entire body parts’ relations to one another and view the body from all angles.

AN INTERVIEW WITH REAL PHYSICAL THERAPIST**—**Matthew Scherer, Medical Specialist Corps, United States Army, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington D. C.

1. **I chose this career because…** “I chose to become a physical therapist because I wanted to promote wellness and spend time treating and interacting with my patients.Growing up, I always had an interest in science. I was greatly influenced by my parents. They pushed for achievement in academics and provided a good example of diligent work ethics. As I approached college, I had an interest in natural sciences and in medical school. However, I did not want a long period of schooling, as necessary with medical school. I wanted to promote wellness and work with patients sooner, rather than later. I thought that physical therapy might be in my future.”
2. **My typical workday involves…** “My typical workday at the Walter Reed Hospital is a long day involving the duties of an Army officer, patient responsibilities in the clinic, administrative tasks, personal physical fitness and leadership.”

**Typical Schedule:**

* My day begins with a workout in the gym and physical training, which is required by the Army.
* At 7 AM, on Monday and Thursdays, I evaluate outpatient ambulatory patients, and evaluate and treat primarily active duty military personnel.
* At 9 AM, I begin work with patients in the amputee service, dealing largely with the war-wounded who have lost limbs due to blast injuries incurred overseas. Together we work to improve their gait, balance, and general conditioning. Each patient works about 3 hours per day on rehabilitation, including time with an occupational therapist. Our goal is to have the patient return to the physical condition they had before they were injured.

1. **What I like best/least about my work…** “What I like *best* about my work is to see the patients make progress toward their goals and improve their level of functional activity. As the patient progresses toward independence, I feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment and a justification of my career choice. Fitness and wellness are important to me, and I know it will be part of my patients’ lives throughout their rehabilitation.”

“What I like *least* about my work are the long hours. There is so much to accomplish during the day. The long hours away from home can weigh heavily on my family. The rewards however, far outweigh the disadvantages. The toughest part is over - the 19 months I spent crunching out graduate work at Baylor. That was really tough!”

1. **My career goal is to…** My career goal is to stay in the Army and continue my education. I would like to have certification in neurological rehabilitation, and strength and conditioning coaching. I also plan to apply for graduate school through the military training opportunities. With a Ph.D. (doctor of philosophy) in physical therapy, I will be able to teach and train others.   
     
   When my time in the military is complete, and my children have grown up, my wife and I would like to work abroad again. It may be with the Peace Corps or an organization needing a therapist with experience with amputee patients.
2. **When I’m not working, I like to…** “When I’m not working, I like to spend time with my wife and son. We love the out-of-doors and enjoy hiking with our dogs. Although I am very satisfied with my work in the hospital, my life would not be complete without opportunities to explore nature and learn new things.”
3. **In praise of a liberal arts program…** “I am an advocate for a liberal arts education. It develops a well-rounded individual who is able to communicate effectively and is ready to explore life’s many opportunities. Physical therapy training is possible regardless of your undergraduate degree. The prerequisites can be gained whenever the student is ready to focus on the goal. My advice to students is to see a lot, do a lot, and as a result, make a better career choice.”

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